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New Issues in Teaching Reading*

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NOTABLE reforms in teaching reading have occurred at frequent intervals throughout the last century. Prior to 1910, three types of changes occurred. One series of reforms aimed to improve the methods by which young children were taught to read thoughtfully, fluently, accurately and independently. A second series modified the content of readers at frequent intervals to reflect the transition from the religious to the secular objective and later to harmonize with the literary ideal. A third series increased rapidly the amount of reading material provided as the single book for all pupils was expanded into a graded series of readers and as supplementary readers and library books were introduced. Significant as such changes were, they affected primarily the activities of the reading period. During the period from 1910 to 1930, an unusual number of reforms occurred affecting not only the activities of the reading period but of the content fields as well. The fact is well known that reading began about two decades ago to take on broader aims and purposes and to utilize more varied methods and content. These reforms were due largely to changing social needs, to

the development of broader curriculums in both elementary and secondary schools and to the results of hundreds of scientific studies relating to reading. On various occasions, the most significant of these reforms have been briefly characterized as follows: the enrichment of the activities of the reading period; the provision of wide reading opportunities in the content fields; the organization of the materials read in terms of interesting units or problems; and the provision of guidance in reading in various school subjects and activities. Implicit in these changes have been the provision of highly interesting, challenging and purposeful reading activities; increased emphasis on silent reading; radical improvements in the methods of teaching reading, both oral and silent; variations in the content and methods used to meet individual needs; the use of diagnostic and remedial procedures; the cultivation of strong motives for independent reading; and the development of more efficient study habits. As a result of these and other changes, notable progress has been made during the last twenty years toward a reading program of great breadth and excellence.

But we cannot be complacent with the achievements of the past. Current needs which are rooted deeply in contemporary

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social life are demanding a critical evaluation of teaching and radical readjustments of various types. The fact is universally recognized, for example, that education must be more closely integrated with social life in the future than in the past. The demand is insistent for greater enlightenment concerning the trends, institutions, and problems of contemporary social life. Equally urgent is the demand for the development of those interests, insights and abilities which will enable all citizens to participate more intelligently and zealously in remoulding American life. If the schools are to contribute effectively to such ends, every phase of instruction must be rigorously scrutinized and changes made, if necessary, in the objectives, content and methods of teaching. During the remainder of the time allotted to me, I wish to consider certain innovations and new emphases in instruction with respect to reading which seem highly desirable today in the light of recent social trends and needs.

Of first importance is the fact that the reading materials used should contribute richly to social enlightenment. Now, as never before, children and adults alike need assistance in understanding. This view is emphasized pointedly by Judd as follows: "It is our opportunity and our duty to evolve a plan of education that will provide every individual with that broad training which leads to freedom of the type guided by insight and understanding." Or, as expressed by the Commission of Seven which prepared a report recently on Higher Education in California, "It is the primary and fundamental function of the common school extending from the earliest years of schooling . . . to educate the citizen for all those common understandings and co-operations which are necessary to sustain the best in our complex contemporaneous civilization." Equally important is the fact that boys and girls must acquire a social rather than a selfish personality and must learn increasingly from year to year to work and live together successfully "in and through the institutions of a civiliza-

tion that must be constantly adapted to changing conditions."

If the materials read contribute to these ends, they should have intrinsic social worth. The recent tendency to make use during the reading period of selections and books that present ideals of good citizenship and illuminating information about social institutions and activities is a step in the direction indicated. Of equal significance is the effort of many literature teachers to stimulate reading and discussion concerning vital social issues such as the characteristics of real patriots in contemporary life. But the plea for social enlightenment must not be interpreted narrowly. The materials read should promote that broad type of understanding which modern life requires. Consequently, the use of reading materials relating to such issues as workers and their work, transportation and communication, and life in other lands is highly desirable.

Furthermore, the materials read should build a common culture so much needed today in our national life. Its nature is dictated in part by the fact that our population has tended to break up increasingly during recent years in terms of economic, religious and racial interests. In almost every classroom, and I quote, "there exist in embryo the conflicting interests that will later manifest themselves in blocs, strikes, and even in religious and racial persecutions" unless the school can reveal to these future citizens their common heritage and "can imbue them with a reverence for the common humanity that underlies all apparent differences." Such statements suggest some of the vital functions that reading materials must serve today. They attach new significance to the content of what pupils read. They supply convincing evidence that teachers and school officers should use great wisdom and care in selecting the materials read in all school subjects and activities. It is no longer a question of absolute value, but rather of relative worth, in promoting social understanding and enlightenment.

The second issue with which we are here concerned relates to the habits of

thinking and interpretation that accompany reading. The need was never greater for more incisive thinking while reading and for greater breadth and depth of interpretation. As has been pointed out repeatedly of late, instruction must aid in the clarification of thinking and feeling and in the definition of human values in terms of life and opportunity today. Wisely selected reading material will prove of little value unless pupils acquire reading habits which will make clear the meaning and social significance of what they read. The need is urgent today that teachers re-dedicate themselves to this exacting obligation. It implies numerous specific responsibilities which can be little more than enumerated here; the development of greater accuracy and independence in the recognition of all essential words; the constant expansion of the meaning vocabulary in all reading activities; the development of efficient habits of comprehension which result in a clear grasp of the meanings and relationships within a passage; and the stimulation of those habits of thinking while reading which lead to the interpretation of the materials read in terms of their social significance. In order to achieve satisfactory progress in these directions, the cooperation of all teachers in both elementary and secondary schools is essential. The teachers of reading should lay a broad foundation of fundamental reading habits common to all types of reading. The teacher of each content field should strive persistently to develop those social understandings and to promote those modes of thinking which will result in breadth and depth of interpretation. The fact has often been emphasized in the past that the teacher of reading should prepare pupils to read independently and to comprehend well in content fields. Of equal, if not greater, significance is the responsibility of the content teacher to promote those understandings and modes of thinking that enable the reader to interpret broadly and deeply in general, as well as in specialized reading activities. Only as every teacher contributes to the maximum toward these

ends can we hope to develop a generation of citizens capable of grasping the fuller meaning and significance of what they read.

But social needs today require that we carry training in reading to still higher levels. It must promote those habits of thinking and interpretation which result in discovery and invention. The report on recent social trends pointed out clearly that the reconstruction of our social life and the solution of urgent social problems will require invention on the part of all citizens and wisdom in designing, perfecting and applying their discoveries. As an aid in promoting growth in these directions, it has often been urged of late that pupils should be trained increasingly to grapple with problems, that they should acquire interest and initiative in discovery and invention, that they should utilize increasingly their capacity for creative imagination, and that they should acquire an adventurous temper and the power of self-direction in the study of social problems. It is obvious that reading materials should be approached increasingly in the spirit of conquest, not only to acquire a clear comprehension of what is read and a broad interpretation of its significance, but also to apply the facts learned in the solution of genuine problems and to discover new and significant relationships, thus laying the foundation for incisive and inventive habits of thinking while reading so much needed in contemporary life.

If the habits of thinking and interpretation to which reference has been made are developed satisfactorily, two important changes are essential in current practice. In the first place, the reading materials provided must be sufficiently simple at each level of advancement so that attention may be directed largely to interpretation and invention rather than to recognition and comprehension. The chief barriers to rapid progress in this connection are first, the difficulty of much of the reading material used today at different grade levels, and, second, the inade-

quate preparation of most pupils to engage in high-grade reading and interpretation in content fields. In order to overcome the latter difficulty, a second desirable change is essential. As soon as pupils have learned to engage in continuous meaningful reading from books, they should be introduced to very simple, interesting, challenging reading material in each of the fields of study that have large social significance, such as the social studies, the world of nature, health, art, and number. Some of the important aims of teaching such materials are to establish early a broad background of experience in each field, to develop and enrich essential meaning vocabularies, to initiate the development of habits of thinking and interpretation appropriate in each, and to cultivate important interests, attitudes and ideals. With such a foundation established in the lower grades, pupils may advance rapidly in the middle and upper grades to the broader study and interpretation of socially significant reading materials.

If children and young people learn to adapt themselves intelligently to a rapidly changing social environment, education must become increasingly a process that continues throughout life. To this end, they must acquire initiative and efficiency in independent reading activities. Ability to solve important personal and social problems through the aid of reading materials requires obviously a wide acquaintance with sources of information and a high degree of efficiency in reading for different purposes. Pupils will acquire the appropriate information, habits, and skills only as they have frequent opportunity, beginning in the lower grades, to study challenging problems under the guidance of teachers who provide tactful suggestions when needed, impose an increasing amount of responsibility on them, and stimulate them to creative effort. Some of the problems that are thus studied should doubtless relate to issues in which the class as a whole is interested. Others should serve chiefly to satisfy special interests or to aid in discovering new

ones. In studying problems independently, pupils should learn to utilize all the facilities that the classroom, the school library, the public library, and the community afford. It is obvious that we are now concerned with a form of teaching of a highly desirable type. Its advantages are numerous. It frees capable students at times from the restraints imposed on them by slower pupils when all are working on the same problem; it provides for rapid growth in ability to find and make use of valuable reading material; it promotes interest in discovery and in the thorough solution of problems; it promotes initiative and independence in types of reading activities that increase personal and social efficiency; and it insures the development of the reading attitudes and habits on which education as a continuous progress is based.

Closely associated with the demand for greater efficiency in independent reading is the need for promoting broader and more adequate recreational reading habits. The importance of constructive effort in this connection is emphasized by the results of studies of what young people and adults read. To a surprisingly large extent, the books and magazines read have very little, if any, educational value and in many cases may be characterized as positively harmful. Such facts make it imperative that teachers re-dedicate themselves to the task of broadening interests and of elevating reading tastes. The most effective results cannot be achieved in this connection unless the teachers of every important field of study accept as a major responsibility the development of desirable reading interests. In discussing the broader social significance of this problem, Dean Russell has said "that in days to come there will be more persons at rest than at work, and more leisure than labor; and that, as in the past, failure to prepare for these conditions will bring disaster. For lethargy of mind and body is a fertile field for the seeds of discontent, disorder, and disease. Thus, education for leisure and enrichment of adult life is no slight educational activity; it is no peri-

Language Ability and Personality Adjustment

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THE usual recent courses of study throw two challenges to the teacher of language in the elementary school; one, to discover the needs and abilities of individual pupils and to plan the language program on the basis of these findings; the other, to utilize as the materials of the language course the content of all subjects in the curriculum and the expressional opportunities of all school activities. It is with the first of these challenges that this article is concerned.

What are the language needs and difficulties of these pupils? If we define these needs merely as problems of correcting usage, of improving sentence structure, of eliminating the "and" habit, and of securing "good beginning sentences," we are assuming that language is a tool, the use of which is mastered by practice. If a child has been timid in speaking before his class and has made mistakes in usage in giving his talk, under this assumption we have prescribed for him more of just that sort of experience. We have been careful, too, to make him, and often the class, also, conscious of his mistakes in usage, and we have perhaps given him drill for the correction of those expressions. Then at some later period we have given him an opportunity to show improvement. Having assumed that effective speech is a habit that is developed by practice, we have been startled to discover that in his second talk the pupil was more hesitant and made more errors than before.

In an effort to discover why such procedures were not effective and what were more fundamental problems of language teaching, Madison teachers, under the direc-

tion of Maude Havenor, chairman of a curriculum committee, made a survey of the expressional abilities and difficulties of their pupils. The type of language expression that was considered the goal was comfortable, appropriate communication of ideas. By this definition language becomes a social, as well as an individual, ability. The habit theory was discarded, except as it concerned a limited amount of expression, those responses that are made frequently without much need for thought. We assumed that the major part of speaking and writing is the symbol of thinking. When something interferes with clarity of thinking, talking is an ordeal, and assistance with sentence structure or word choice is not only futile but a further interference in clear expression.

In defining what might be considered language problems the committee used this broad definition which includes the social aspects of language expression. The aggressive child who demanded a chance to talk and refused to listen to others was considered as much a language problem as the one who talked too little. Teachers were asked to list all pupils with these or other noticeable expressional difficulties.

The table below shows the types of difficulties that were listed by the teachers in response to the questionnaire:

<i>Language Difficulty</i>	<i>Number of Pupils Reported</i>
A. Speech too low or fast	112
B. Rambling talk	72
C. Usage errors	67
D. Inability to listen	104
E. Lack of originality	56
F. Unwillingness to take part in discussion	67
G. Embarrassment in speaking before the class (timidity)	243
H. Indifference to discussion	60

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- I. Eagerness to talk—tendency to monopolize 119
 J. Too much docility in accepting criticisms or comments in discussion 20

The pupils who were reported as having such difficulties comprised twenty per cent of the pupils enrolled in the Madison schools. These are evidently the most obvious cases. It is not customary to consider problems of language teaching from the physical and mental hygiene viewpoint. This study gives plenty of evidence, however, that such an attack is fundamental. As we continue, year after year, to consider these basic problems of expression, we shall become more keenly observant and understanding. As with physicians of much experience, conditions which were missed previously will become significant, the diagnoses will be more accurate and treatment will be more intelligently applied.

The number of pupils in our schools making frequent grammatical errors was found to be much smaller than is usually assumed in the construction of textbooks and courses of study. All of such problems may not have been reported, but still a comparison of this number with the number of other difficulties reported indicates justification for shifting emphasis away from correctness as a class objective, and for making the attack upon it individual.

The most interesting information furnished by the survey is that there are twice as many problems due to timidity as to aggressiveness, that is, twice as many pupils were reported to be embarrassed in speaking before the group as were reported to be too eager to talk. Many language textbooks have been built upon the principle that children's expression should be limited and controlled to meet a standard of correctness. There is evidence in these reports to warrant emphasis upon stimulation and encouragement of expression rather than upon direction and suppression.

Indifference and docility are vital language problems because of the need for intelligent listening. It is easy to miss detecting the too-docile child, but even

among the cases reported there was no small amount of that type of difficulty.

Our problem after the survey became one of learning what physical, mental, or environmental conditions might interfere with clear thinking and its concomitant, clear expression. The case study method seemed to be the best means of providing such knowledge.

Possible reasons for these difficulties were sought in a careful study of twenty pupils as typical cases.¹ An effort was made to learn whether there was in the child's health, in his environment, or in his personal relationship with his classmates any underlying cause of his inarticulateness or his loquacity.

Physical record cards were studied for defects needing correction. Attendance cards gave information concerning absence for illness. Pupils were observed on the playground and in the classroom for evidence of poor adjustment to others. In some cases home calls were made to secure the assistance of parents. The psychologists in the guidance department cooperated in the study of each child. Teacher and pupil relationship was given study. A test of personality adjustment, giving an index of personal inferiority, social inferiority, family maladjustment, and tendency to escape from reality, was used experimentally.

The committee sent to teachers bulletins giving suggestions for remedial treatment. A sampling from one of these bulletins is given below:

Suggestions of the Committee for Correction of Specific Difficulties

1. Examination of the child for physical defects.
2. Knowledge of the home situation will be necessary. In obtaining this and in gaining cooperation with the home, the Child Guidance Department will be helpful.
3. Freedom of expression in all fields, such as rhythm, art, music, pantomime, creative work, provides emotional outlets and gives a richness of experience through which language freedom develops.
4. A sympathetic classroom atmosphere is essential to the progress of these pupils with emotional

¹ Reports of some of these case studies are given in the bulletin, *Language Curriculum*, Part I, issued by the Madison Public Schools, Madison, Wisconsin.

problems. This means that not all children in the group should be treated alike, but that each should have equal opportunity with the others according to his needs and abilities.

5. Ways of handling specific difficulties

a. Timidity

- (1) Put child to work at his own level and lead him gradually from what he can do to a higher level.
- (2) Help him to think through a problem and prepare a few brief sentences with which he is satisfied.
- (3) Provide situations calling for cooperative effort.
- (4) Bring about group approval when possible for it to be sincere.
- (5) Avoid subjecting a timid pupil to group criticism.
- (6) Let him work with a child whom he likes, to give him a sense of security.
- (7) Be generous but sincere with praise.
- (8) Let him have a feeling of success and of your satisfaction with his achievement.
- (9) Attempt to determine the cause of any inferiority complex.
 - (a) If due to a physical characteristic which makes him conspicuous, such as freckles, unusual size, wearing glasses, curly or red hair, the teacher may enlist the cooperation of the group. This must be done tactfully without the knowledge of the child.
 - (b) If due to an unfortunate home condition, such as unfavorable comparison with another child in the family, or indulgent or over-severe parents, the Child Guidance Department can make suggestions to the parents.

b. Aggressiveness

- (1) If caused by a feeling of inferiority, handle him much the same as you would the child who for a similar reason is timid.
- (2) If caused by a consciousness of unusual ability, his leadership has been over-emphasized by frequent appointments as chairman of committees, for leading parts in programs, or possibly by references of teachers to his work as superior.
 - (a) Distribute leadership jobs more fairly in the group.

- (b) Lead the group to judge his work with some degree of sternness.

- (c) Give him much individual work, so that he is not always forcing himself upon, nor being compared with, the group.

- (d) If possible, put him in a group whose ability is equivalent to, or better, than his.

- (3) If aggressiveness has developed in self-defense against stronger personalities (usually adults in the home), give him many opportunities for expressing his own individuality without imposing on other children.

- (a) Creative work
- (b) Individual projects
- (c) Special responsibility

c. Nervousness

- (1) Do not hurry him. Allow time for him to express himself.
- (2) Eliminate speed element in all his work. Give more time for thoughtful preparation in language.
- (3) Avoid competition, the selection of the best, etc.
- (4) Make your standard for him the best result that he can secure.
- (5) Create an atmosphere of calm and quiet in the classroom without interfering with the freedom of the children.
- (6) Rest periods are beneficial to these pupils and to all other children, as well.
- (7) Do not overtax the capable child with too much special work. Extra credit work should be interesting, not a repetition of something already mastered.
- (8) Avoid over-stimulation or inflated enthusiasm.
- (9) Teacher must be careful that her voice is not irritating. Keep voice distinct and vigorous as well as pleasant and low-pitched.

d. Undesirable social attitudes

- (1) On the playground
The attitude the group takes toward the child because of his playground behavior sometimes influences his classroom reactions. If he does not enter into the spirit of play, play fair, consider the interests of the group, or observe the rules of the

game, his unpopularity with the group creates in him an antagonistic attitude which carries over into the classroom, thereby inhibiting the freedom of his expression.

- (a) May we suggest that any teacher who notices unsocial responses in the classroom watch the children at play?
- (b) Form clubs which set up standards of good sportsmanship.
- (c) If this child excels in any sport, his leadership in that field may result in his gaining the admiration of the group.
- (d) Organize the pupils' play as suggested by the bulletins of the physical education department.
- (e) Make playground situations the subject of conversation and discussion in the classroom, thereby raising the standards of play.

Different treatment was required for each pupil because of the various apparent reasons for the difficulty in each case. The general objective was to provide the pupil with the best physical conditions that the school could obtain for him and with a feeling of security in his relations with his fellows.

In general, direct criticism and class evaluation of expression were eliminated from the teaching procedure. Emphasis was placed on effort and achievement. Little was said about the need for improvement at first although all evidence of it was complimented.

Since most of these pupils were less timid in small groups than with the entire class, the teachers arranged many opportunities for them to discuss a problem with a small group in which there were no outstanding leaders to provide competition. The too-aggressive pupil on the other hand was frequently placed in a small group of natural leaders who demanded their share of time in such discussion.

Sometimes the playground was a part of the corrective program. The too-docile or timid child was drawn into games where the relations with other children were free

and natural. After a friendly time on the playground, it was sometimes easier to draw out children who did not usually take part in classroom discussion.

Competition was considered both unfair and detrimental to these pupils. Their reports were not discussed in comparison with other reports, and their stories were not written under the direction to "see who can have the best story." No opportunity was missed, however, for sincere recognition of all satisfactory achievement on their part. More time for preparation was provided because the difficulties seemed to be more pronounced when these pupils were called upon unexpectedly to express themselves.

Their special interests and abilities were studied so that they might be encouraged to contribute to the class something on which they were informed and enthusiastic. Teachers who were most successful were those who had many centers of interest in their rooms. Sometimes groups of two or more pupils made investigations on topics unknown to the rest of the class so that a real audience awaited their reports.

This program made necessary an informal room organization and eliminated the language class as a place where instruction in mechanics was the main task of the teacher. Much of the work was placed on a volunteer basis. Requirements, particularly those demanding production under time pressure, were found to be added difficulties in the way of confident expression. The unit organization, or activity program, as it is sometimes called, seemed to be more flexible and therefore better suited to provide for the varied needs of the pupils found in the usual classroom.

Every year a similar survey of expressional difficulties will be made as a part of the diagnostic program that includes tests and other analyses of needs. The treatment of such problems may require radical changes in our classroom procedure and in our concepts of fundamental language skills, but the concentration of thought and effort on individual needs will justify such changes.

Letter Writing in the Elementary Grades

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THE fact that letter writing has been accorded increasing precedence over other forms of written composition in recent years is proof of its actual value and use. Courses of study have forcefully recommended that the art of correspondence should be taught. Supervisors and principals have urged teachers to create in their pupils an eagerness and to develop a skill in writing letters. Scores have taken up the gauntlet valiantly and taught many pupils to write forceful letters. Hundreds have struggled less valiantly and taught some children to write with average clearness. Thousands have found two or three dull letters in their state-adopted language text, decided the form was passable, and have had all their children write mediocre letters.

Quite recently, through the consistent, intelligent work of many teachers, letters written by children have begun to show marked improvement in clearness of expression. For years, roadside bridges have fulfilled their duties as bridges. Today, community leagues plant larkspur, ragged robins and hollyhocks on either side to lend beauty to the plainness of their construction. Such additions do not impair their strength. On the contrary, they enhance their value. Similarly, it is imperative that our boys and girls are convinced of the necessity and inspired with the ambition to increase the beauty of quality in their letters. An earnest avowal for maintaining the standard of forcefulness already gained, coupled with a desire for ever-increasing excellence in expression, should finally bring a realization of the best in letter writing.

Although many teachers have given the

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improvement of their pupils' letters serious thought, they have lacked definite guidance for an intelligent program of work. Within my knowledge, Mr. Fitzgerald's study of the situations in which children write letters is the most helpful introduction for the wise direction of emphasis. Certainly so important a subject presents a challenge for further investigation. His examination of letters from over 3000 children of intermediate grades in forty-one states, may easily form a working basis for our needs. For our discussion, his most important findings seem to be the following:

1. Children write approximately thirteen different types of letters, including those concerning experiences, thanks for gifts or courtesies, greeting, congratulations, sympathy, apology, and requests.
2. Compared with the numbers written in other types, there seemed to be a dearth of notes for congratulation, condolence and greeting.
3. There seemed to be little variation in the essentials for those written by boys and girls.
4. Only a slight difference was noticeable in the general types of letters for various grade levels.¹

Most wisely, Mr. Fitzgerald recommends that a sensitivity to situations that call for letters be developed in our children. In addition, he urges that we create a will to write in response to those situations. Finally, he suggests that children should know what tools to use and how to use them effectively.

From work in my own classes and that of my colleagues, I have chosen a few

1. James A. Fitzgerald, "Situations in Which Children Write Letters Outside of School." *Educational Method* XV, 231.

examples of the types mentioned in the Fitzgerald study. They range from the third grade to the sixth and were written by children of average intelligence as part of their regular composition work. In no case did they know that their letters might be used for illustrative purposes.

The first, a composite letter, is by a group of third grade children. Class letters of this kind, composed by the group, have a definite place in letter writing, but they are especially good in the lower grades. It reads:

Louisville, Kentucky
June 9, 1933

Dear Miss Zachari,

We thank you very much for lending us your spinning wheel. We took very good care of it. Some of the little girls had their pictures taken with it. We hope you will come in and see them.

With best wishes for a happy vacation,

Your little friends of the 3A-B Class.

A situation that required a note of sympathy developed in a fourth grade:

Thursday.

Dear Trimmier:

We are sorry for you. We miss you at school. We hope you will soon be back with us.

The Fourth Grade

While not a good practice to follow often, there are times when notes sent in the same building in which the writers are, justify themselves. This one from a fifth grade seems to qualify:

Louisville Normal School
Louisville, Kentucky
March 24, 1933

Dear Miss Ruth,

I enjoyed your Indian play very much. I think you have a very smart class to have a play like that. They had to work hard to make the wigwam and trees. We thought they were real trees at first but we found out that they were not. I think SheeShee did his part when he killed that big rabbit.

Your true friend,

Earl Chapman, 5B

In the sixth grade there should be a greater ease in the expression of appreciation than shown in the fifth grade. In the two letters that follow, there seems to be a slight evidence of this quality:

Normal School
Louisville, Kentucky
May 26, 1933

Dear Miss Radmaker,

We get the view of your garden from our classroom. We write poetry about your fishpond. In my leisure time I look at the pigeons fly about. I think that the roses and bird bath are beautiful. We have enjoyed the entire garden this spring. We have a poetry corner in our room and hope to put many verses about your garden in our corner.

Yours sincerely,

Sixth B Class,
Robert Crooks

Peabody Demonstration School
Nashville, Tennessee
February 15, 1928

Mr. Walter Damrosch
New York Symphony Orchestra
New York City

My dear Mr. Damrosch,

I enjoyed your program very much and hope to hear another as good as that. The music I liked best was the "March Militaire." It sounded like my little dog's tail when wagged slowly.

Guess where I'm from? Why New Jersey. If I were there now my letter would get to you sooner. But perhaps if I were there now my letter would not get to you at all.

We have a magazine published every six weeks. I will send you a Valentine number.

Sincerely yours,

Virginia Bryer

As in all other phases of classroom instruction, the teacher's attitude is of signal importance. Not only should she be familiar with letters of rare charm and a master in letter writing herself, but she should also believe so firmly in the value of it for children that she will work unceasingly to have her pupils attain similar skill.

For children in the early elementary grades whose experience and circle of friends are limited, notes of a sentence or two suffice. Invitations to school parties and exhibits are characteristic types. As their experiences widen, other situations may present themselves, but prior to the fourth grade, simple content is best. As to form, for these grades, the day of the week as a heading and a simple compli-

mentary close of the child's own expression are all that is necessary.

With mature fourth grade children, and certainly in fifth grade work, definite steps toward improvement of content should be given. Encouragement in originality of expression also has its inception here. Not for imitation, but for inspiration, a few good letters to or by children may be read in class. Hugh Lofting's description of his childhood museum is always pleasing. The whimsical humor in Stevenson's appreciation of his name-daughter, Annie Ide, to whom he gave his birthday, makes a strong appeal. Favorite nieces delight in Gertie's affectionate travel letters from her devoted uncle, Phillips Brooks. The number read should depend on the interests and needs of a class.

After several have been read, the characteristics that make them of excellent quality may be used as criteria by which children may judge the letters of others and, later, their own. In intermediate grades, they may well ask:

1. Does it have a purpose?
2. Does it suit the person to whom it is written?
3. Is it conversational in tone?

In discussing letters from literary sources the fourth,

Is there evidence of originality or personal style?²

may also be a question. To encourage children in the development of a personal style, teachers should make capital of even the slightest evidence of desirable individuality. Such a coveted quality requires nurture, but it is scarcely noticeable before the intermediate grades.

Obviously, the situations in many classrooms where children are "patiently ordering imaginary magazines, accepting imaginary invitations, and thanking imaginary relatives for imaginary gifts"³ has been endured entirely too long. To know not a person to whom to send a letter and to have nothing to say if you did

have an acquaintance, is not conducive to good results. "Letters should be real, written to flesh and blood people with a genuine impulse to write."⁴ Before a real consciousness of the importance and pleasure to be derived from letters is developed in children, we must provide experiences that will furnish motives for their writing. In the activities of our modern educational program, many suggestions offer themselves immediately. A few that are entirely natural for children are those growing out of group interests—notes of appreciation for courtesies extended on class trips, to a teacher of a special subject who has been helpful to them in one of their class projects, or thanks to a visitor who has talked to the group. More individual in character are greetings to accompany a gift on Mother's Day or some other occasion.

An opportune time to teach letters of thanks is the day after the Christmas vacation. If we take the advice of Burgess in *HAVE YOU AN EDUCATED HEART?*⁵, we may not only express our appreciation at the time a gift is received but also months, or even years, afterwards. Sometimes, instead of a note of thanks, an invitation to a friend to spend a few days needs to be written. Again, after a visit to some relative, a bread-and-butter note is forthcoming. But, whatever the occasion, it must be a real purpose for writing.

Often we have to create a situation for letter writing by asking teachers in other sections of the country for an exchange of letters with their pupils. Correspondence of this kind is beneficial in widening horizons. However, in many schools, after the perfunctory answer has been received, no further communication is carried on. If correspondence does continue, and it should, there is a chance for constant improvement. When every teacher in our schools is convinced that a definite reason for writing is always needed, and that she should have all letters written in school

² Stella S. Center and Lillian M. Saul, *A Book of Letters*, Century and Company, 1924, p. 207.

³ Madeline Speaks, "Letter Writing Made Real" *English Journal*, XIX, 569.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 569.

⁵ Gelett A. Burgess, *Have You An Educated Heart?* Horace Liveright, 1923.

sent to the persons for whom they were intended, one of the chief obstacles to effective teaching of this topic will be overcome.

Letter forms, like the mastery of fundamentals in arithmetic, should be given speedy but thorough treatment. The laboratory method, first seen in a composition class of Miss Lula O. Andrews, then of Peabody College, has proven an excellent method of teaching correctness and beauty of form. With from twenty-five to fifty letters mounted in the classroom for children to examine, a graphic presentation is possible. After the children's inspection of headings, salutations, margins, punctuation and general placement, they discuss what seem to be the most acceptable forms. They even select their favorites from the standpoint of general appearance. As a check, cards may be passed at the close of the hour with the directions, "Write the entire form for a friendly letter on the card you received, omitting only the body of the letter." Through the use of a projector, class discussion may center around the cards as they are flashed on the board. When perfect ones are shown, praise is given by the class. Children who made errors may correct their mistakes when their cards are returned. Firm insistence on absolute perfection in form, at the outset, is essential. By diligence on the part of all, great speed should be made in the mastery of correct form. When this is acquired early in the teaching of letters, time often wasted on that phase of the work may be released for enrichment of content. In fact, it is inexcusable to spend a long time on form or the mechanics in any kind of written composition.

High standards, even for the first letter written in a given year, require careful guidance of the work of individual pupils. But when they proudly bring replies to their first letters and share them with their companions, the struggle seems of great worth. Unquestionably, one milestone on the road to good letter writing has been passed when answers to the first letters have been received.

By continual enthusiasm, teachers should stimulate their groups with eagerness to have each successive letter sent, a marked improvement over the last. Attractive specimens written by one of the class should frequently be shown to other pupils before they are put in the post. As soon as one worthy of praise comes as an answer, it should claim the commendation that it deserves.

In many of our schools today, children help to choose their own goals in English for the year. What is more necessary to learn than letter writing? Ability to write the types of letters required in their grade should be checked off as completed work when their efforts meet standards. For those of exceptional ability, these may be achieved early in the year. The problem facing a teacher in such a case is to create situations that will continue to challenge those children until sufficient practice has been given to render the skill permanent. Not until that attainment is reached should there be cessation in the writing of friendly letters for them. From that time on, a pleasurable sense of success will have them find their own situations for writing. With children who progress slowly, ingenuity must be exercised to furnish constant demands for short letters. We like to believe the statement of Mr. Makey⁶ that any pupil can be led to write intelligently any kind of letter that he may need to write.

The need for writing business letters is much less frequent than for social types, but the form is more exacting in its requirements. In introducing this aspect of the unit to a class, the question, "In what ways are business letters similar and in what ways different from friendly ones?" may open the discussion. For the likenesses, children will give neatness, courtesy, careful English and clearness. As differences, purpose, form and expression are noticeable.

With the increasing use of typewriters, even among children, it seems desirable to use the form of block heading for both

⁶ Herman O. Makey, "Imagination in Business Letters," *English Journal* XXII, 45.

social and business correspondence. The salutation and complimentary close in business letters vary so slightly for the needs of children that the proper forms for certain types may be quickly learned.

It was my good fortune to have an unusual opportunity for the writing of business letters in a sixth grade. A savings deposit of eighty dollars had been made from sales of a school newspaper. When it was decided to release the sum, the class voted the purchase of books as an ideal way to spend the money. After the order list was made from children's choices, there were enough books for each pupil to order at least one from the publishers.⁷

Such situations are not always possible, but requests for material in the social studies, applications for summer work and all correspondence with local firms to which excursions are made, comprise the usual opportunities for writing. Others of a different nature have a place in classrooms of many schools. For instance, in a fourth grade, some time ago, a milk fund for two under-privileged children in the city hospital was started. The letters and their replies furnished a splendid chance for the cultivation of that sensitivity so much to be desired.

After this discussion, we are reminded of several values of letters. First, they have given and will continue to give an intimate knowledge of people in literary and historical circles whom we should never otherwise meet. Bynner calls them "letters that bring the true, the beautiful, the everlasting, into simple, easy touch with the human, the homely and the immediate."⁸

In contrast to letters of literary value, is the blessed intercourse with friends through the medium of pen and paper. Emily Dickinson, supreme exponent of conversational style in letters, affirms that "a letter is a joy of earth—it is denied the gods."⁹

⁷ See *The Elementary English Review*, September, 1930, for a fuller account of this activity.

⁸ Witter Bynner, *The Jade Mountain*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1920, XVII.

⁹ Martha D. Bianchi, *The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson*, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1924, p. 363.

A teacher may well ask, "How may I become cognizant of the fact that a child has begun to succeed in letter writing?" The following letter, written by a sixth grade girl, is evidence of such attainment.

Carpenter Cottage
Monteagle, Tennessee
Box 209
June 24, 1926

Dear Miss Walsh:

We're all having a fine time up here though the assembly is not yet open.

On the train we had a grand time, as few of us except Mother had been on a train often. We came on the Pullman and spent most of the time on the little observation car. As the train squeaked all the time especially right behind my seat, I thought any minute it would fall to pieces.

Our cottage is very large compared to some of them. There is one thing which is quite queer. We call it Pharaoh's lamp, but Daddy thinks it is one of the new traffic signals.

It hasn't been hot since we've been up here, and we've had a wood fire a number of times. There has been a lot of rain, too. I have bought a ticket to the library and have already read four books. If the vacation reading lists are ready will you please send me one? (If I can't have both may I have the boys' rather than the girls'?)

Sunday before last we drove up the mountain toward Jasper City and found a deserted coal mine by the side of the road. I would have liked to explore it but we couldn't, of course. There was water dripping down in it and we broke off some coal at the entrance that was so soft that you could crumble it into a powder in your hand. We then went on down to Sewanee. The houses are very pretty there, built after the old English type. Buford found one of them which he thought was Shakespeare's home.

There are many lovely places to go to around here. It is a nice ride to Beersheba and a splendid road all the way to Chattanooga. The scenery is wonderful on this road. They've opened a new tearoom on Lookout called Fairy Land Inn right on the edge of the mountain and from the windows you look down into the valley.

Buddy has been a little upset by the change so Mother has not been able to write but she is going to.

Always your friend,

Martha Buford Jones

Informal Testing in the Use of Books and Libraries

THE INDEX

VILDA BARKER

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Port Arthur, Texas

THE principle that any one ability is complex and made up of many small developing skills is very well illustrated in the ability to use an index. Too many times it is taken for granted that this ability is easily attained and that if a child can use the index in one book he can use the one found in every other book.

Experience shows that the opposite is true. Ability to use the index skillfully is comparatively difficult because of the number of developing steps. In analyzing the process of development the following steps are found to be of major importance. They are given in the order of their probable development in the school.

1. Locating letters in the alphabet by
 - a. telling what letter comes before or after a given letter,
 - b. telling in what part of the alphabet a given letter is found, the first or the last.
2. Arranging words alphabetically — by the first letter, by the first and second letters, by the first, second and third letters.
3. Using a simple index that has only the main topics given
 - a. locating topics in the index,
 - b. finding the pages on which given topics are discussed,
 - c. finding the answers to questions by using the index.
4. Using an index in which the sub-topics are listed in column form
 - a. choosing the main topic in a question or problem,
 - b. finding correct page numbers on which they are discussed.
5. Using an index in which the sub-topics are arranged in paragraph form. This involves use of cross

*This is the second of a series of articles by Miss Barker. The first appeared in *The Review* for June, 1933.

references and familiarity with the punctuation of this type of an index.

From this analysis it can be seen readily that training in the beginning steps should start in the lower grades and that teaching should be carried on up through the junior high school if effective skill is desired. Alphabetizing can be taught in the second and third grades. The skills connected with the use of a simple index can be taught whenever the children begin using readers or reference books which contain indexes of this type, for example, work-type readers. In the same way the use of the two more complicated indexes can be taught whenever the children have text books which contain them. The result of this procedure will be a gradual development of skill.

It should be emphasized that for each new index children need added training until skill is well founded. For example, geography textbooks for the fifth and sixth grades usually contain indexes in which the subtopics are arranged in paragraph form. The indexes found in history texts for the same grades are usually arranged with the subtopics in column form. Both types should be used in the drill period until the children have no difficulty in the use of either one.

The tests that follow are built around the analysis of developing steps that is given above. Comparison of the tests with the analysis will show that a diagnosis of difficulties is possible. Take, for example, the test on the ability to use an index that has only the main topics given. If the majority of the class can do parts one and two readily but fail on part three, then the class as a whole needs more training in finding pages on which answers to ques-

tions are given. Those individual pupils who failed on part one or on part two can be given group or individual drill.

Ability to Locate Letters in the Alphabet

- (1) On the line after each of the letters given below, write the letter which comes *before* it in the alphabet. The first one is done correctly.

1. b a 4. f _____ 7. u _____
2. t _____ 5. i _____ 8. h _____
3. c _____ 6. r _____ 9. o _____

- (2) After each of the letters given below, write the letter which comes *after* it in the alphabet. The first one is done correctly.

1. d e 4. m _____ 7. i _____
2. g _____ 5. e _____ 8. v _____
3. y _____ 6. s _____ 9. a _____

- (3) After each of the letters given below write the word "first" if it comes before the letter "i" in the alphabet. Write the word "last" if it comes after the letter "i" in the alphabet. The first one is done correctly.

1. c first 4. n _____ 7. k _____
2. w _____ 5. j _____ 8. p _____
3. s _____ 6. u _____ 9. f _____

Ability to Arrange Words Alphabetically

Directions to the Pupil: We want to see how well you can arrange words alphabetically. Look at the sample given below. If you arranged these words alphabetically, "basket" would come first. Therefore the number "1" is written on the line after the word. The word "come" would be second in the alphabetical list, so a "2" is written on the line after this word, etc. Work the three exercises below in the same way.

Sample: 1. come 2
2. pupil 3
3. basket 1

Exercise A

1. each _____
2. everything _____
3. engine _____
4. expect _____
5. either _____

6. eye _____
7. eleven _____

Exercise B

1. nation _____
2. nickel _____
3. neighbor _____
4. nest _____
5. neat _____
6. name _____
7. nut _____

Exercise C

1. daily _____
2. another _____
3. dance _____
4. party _____
5. appear _____
6. sailor _____
7. point _____

Ability to Locate Topics in an Index That Has Only the Main Topics

Directions to the Teacher: From an index of main topics, select 45 or 50 items. Have these duplicated, so that each pupil may be provided with a copy.

Directions to the Pupil:

(1) You will be given another sheet upon which you will find some topics taken from the index of Patch, FIRST LESSONS IN NATURE STUDY. Use this index to answer the following questions. Write the answers on the dotted lines after the questions.

- a. How many topics beginning with "D" are in the index? _____
b. Can I find something about "Rice"? _____
c. On what pages can I find something about the squirrel? _____
d. In which part of the index (first or last) shall I look for "Tree Toad"? _____
e. How many times is "Sugar Cane" given in this index? _____

(2) On the line to the right of each of the topics given below write the pages on which you might find something about that topic.

- a. Robin _____
b. Yellow Jacket _____
c. Fur _____

- d. Artificial silk
- e. Chinese silkworm
- f. Trap door spider

(3) On what pages might you be able to find the answers to the questions below? Write the numbers of the pages on the lines after the questions.

- a. Where is rice grown?
- b. What is a tree toad?
- c. How do pineapples grow?
- d. How large is an ostrich?
- e. What insects are told about in this book?

Ability to Use the Index with the Main Topics and Subtopics in Column Form

Directions to the Teacher: Choose a school book indexed by main and subtopics in column form. From the index, select 25 or 30 items for duplication and distribution to the class.

Directions to the Pupil: You will be given another sheet on which you will find topics taken from the index of Dearborn, HOW INDIANS LIVE. This is a test of your ability to use this kind of an index in order to find information in answer to a given question.

- (1) In each of the questions given below draw a line under the *main* topic.

- a. How does an Indian cut bark for a boat?
- b. How does the Indian make his arrows?
- c. For what does the Indian use the shell of the turtle?
- d. Where does the Indian scout get his training?
- e. Is the dress of the Indian Medicine Man different from that of the other Indians?
- f. How many kinds of Indian homes are there?

- (2) Each of the lines below is lettered just like one of the questions given above. After each letter write all the pages on which you can find the answer to the question lettered in the same way. For example, after the letter "a" write all the

pages that will give information in answer to the question, "How does an Indian cut bark for a boat?"

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.
- f.

Ability to Use an Index with the Topics in Paragraph Form

Directions to the Teacher: Proceed as in the foregoing tests, choosing a book indexed in paragraph form.

Directions to the Pupil: On the sheet which will be given to you is an index made up of topics taken from the index of Smith, COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY.

Below you will find three groups of questions, each group having a main topic. On the line *above* each group write the main topic for that group. Using the index, find the pages on which the answers to the questions might be found. Write the numbers of the pages on the lines at the right of the questions.

1.

- a. How do the workmen take care of the sugar beets?
- b. What climate is good for sugar beets?
- c. How much land is used for sugar beets?
- d. How much rain is needed for sugar cane?
- e. How does the production of sugar beets in the United States compare with that of other countries?
- f. Which country raises more sugar cane, Cuba or Java?

2.

- a. How many of the rivers of the United States are navigable? How far?
- b. Where and when was the caravan used?
- c. Where were the principal railroads in the United States in 1911?
- d. How have our water routes helped to keep the freight rates down?

Research in Elementary Language*

Discussion of a Paper Presented by

HARRY A. GREENE

Bureau of Educational Research and Service
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Iowa City

(Concluded)

DISCUSSION

ROBERT C. POOLEY

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THE increasing dissatisfaction with the products of language instruction, together with the inevitable practice of the teachers at any given instructional level to lay the blame upon the teachers of earlier levels for such faults as are found, serves to emphasize the importance and value of a thoughtfully constructed, intelligently guided program of research in elementary language. Such Dr. Greene presents, and from the analysis of the problems, the techniques already developed or projected, and the subordinate studies completed, in progress, or planned, may be expected a wealth of verified data of inestimable value to workers in language at any educational level. Moreover, the breadth of the investigation, the division of effort, and the absence of haste unite to create a feeling of confidence in the results not always implicit in other studies.

Two phases of the report particularly interest me, partly because of their stimulating suggestiveness, and partly because of the dangers and pitfalls to which they are liable. The first is contained in Dr. Greene's statement that "Speech recording (by the Iowa technique) will provide the basis for placing the emphasis on the constructive side of language . . . rather than on . . . error aspects." This is a hopeful note which needs to be sounded again and again. In our zeal to correct and eliminate errors in language, we have been led to concentrate our efforts on the

product—the objective records of speech, whether oral or written—to the neglect of the speech-process—the subjective functioning of the child's mind as he creates speech. As a consequence, we know a great deal about the error of children's language, what they are and how frequent they are, but we know very little indeed about *why* they occur and *why* they persist in spite of drill. Our courses of study are weighted with error-lists and corrective drill materials, so that elementary language instruction in many schools becomes an orgy of error-chasing, to the utter neglect of the basic concept that the purpose of language is communication, and that any normal child is bubbling over with ideas to communicate in any manner which gets the results he desires. With such concepts should courses of study in language begin. Bearing these in mind, therefore, it is discouraging to find the specific studies noted in Mr. Greene's report dealing almost exclusively with the error aspects of language.

The second phase is concerned with usage, particularly grammatical accuracy, and word-choice. The abandonment of the teaching of rules in grammar, and the recognition of the specific character of most language situations has led in recent years to an undue stress on usage, with "correctness" the watchword. This stress, insofar as it results in the elimination of illiteracies and vulgarisms, is justifiable, but unfortunately it goes further in legislating against a great many idioms and usages with wide acceptability, but which run counter to the textbook tradition. In other words, this stress on correctness tends to multiply the instances of "faulty" use. I am therefore uneasy about

*Presented before the meeting of the National Conference on Research in Elementary School English, Minneapolis, February 27, 1933.

the interpretation of such a statement as, "the acceptance of a criterion sufficiently rigid to eliminate faulty or highly debatable practices regardless of their social frequency." If the criterion of good usage is to rest upon the artificial distinctions and prescriptive rules which now make "errors" of many normal uses, then the studies on the curriculum and corrective teaching will be seriously invalidated. A similar danger is to be found in the Report on page 65, ¹(1) (a) unless the sub-points 1'-4' are clearly defined to discriminate social levels of errors in verbs, pronouns, etc. Unless such care is taken, the project will repeat the weakness of the Stormzand and O'Shea *HOW MUCH ENGLISH GRAMMAR?* and similar studies.

It will be clear from my discussion that the research project of Dr. Greene's comprehensive list (Section III-D) which interests me most for intensive research is 2, "The Relative Social Importance of Certain Types of Language Errors." I may interpret this project somewhat differently from Dr. Greene, but it is my opinion that until some definite conclusions are reached concerning the social acceptability of numerous usage forms, with a much more liberal interpretation of correctness than now obtains, no really basic research in curriculum and methods in elementary language can be successfully conducted.

DISCUSSION

PERCIVAL M. SYMONDS

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I HAVE gone over the statement by Dr. Greene with regard to the research program in English expression as carried on at the University of Iowa and feel that it represents a remarkably fine and comprehensive series of studies that must have a pronounced effect on teaching in the field. We must know more concerning the way in which language develops in the child from infancy on up to maturity, and this series of studies proposed and undertaken by Dr. Greene and his colleagues and students undertakes to find answers to some of the more important problems in

the field of the elementary school. It should be realized, however, that language begins before the elementary school period and continues after the elementary school period without any break in continuity of development. This program of research for the elementary school therefore proposes studying records of this development in one particular segment.

The criteria of standards in the mechanics of grammar and punctuation of the language for the school curriculum is a difficult one. The position taken by the recent Leonard report* gives a certain authority for changes in commonly recognized grammar and punctuation standards based on the tolerance or acceptance of usages by responsible people in the literary world. I am not wholly sure that we have thoroughly examined the bases for this report or that we should accept uncritically the recommendations made therein. The argument is based on the fact that language is continually developing according to the changing conditions under which people live and that our school curriculum must be cognizant of these developments and must be pliable enough to include these changes rather than stubbornly to resist them. There are certain reasons, however, why it is well if we do not rush in to accepting the change proposed too eagerly. With the extension of mass education, more and more people have become literate, yet their background and interests do not necessarily place them in the literary class. Consequently our language standards are being influenced more at the present time by persons who are naturally careless in the use of the language than ever before. If one will observe the changes recommended he will note that almost every one of them is what psychologists would call "response by analogy," that is, a word having a certain position in the sentence such as *me* in "It is *me*" or *who* in "Who are you looking for?" takes the incorrect form because of the habit of using the objective form at the end of the sentence or the

*Current English Usage. By Sterling A. Leonard and Others. The National Council of Teachers of English.

¹ See *The Review* for March, 1933.

nominative form at the beginning of the sentence customarily. Every careless usage of this kind which fails to make distinctions between the function of a word and its position helps to break down the grammatical structure, and our language at the present time is full of inconsistencies which have been forced upon it by similar psychological carelessness. We should think twice before we accede to extending this practice by taking over these careless practices in our schools.

In looking over the forms of analysis proposed, it seems to me that not enough attention has been given to the rhetorical and stylistic qualities of writing in the larger sense. Even after grammatical accuracy has been accomplished and attention has been given to sentence structure there is still the further matter of the connection between sentences and the unity of a particular paragraph, the balance and connectedness of sentences, and the relative placement and force with which ideas are expressed. Most of our analytical work in English composition has failed to give much attention to the planning of the whole theme and the successful carrying out of a theme as a structural whole. Are we not making a mistake in much of our research in beginning at the analytical details with the belief that composition is built up by adding together or placing together correct details. May it not be that composition is built in exactly the opposite way? First there is the general idea as expressed by the title. Then one plans an outline which shows the main mode of treatment and plan of organization. This again becomes broken up into paragraphs and sentences and finally the exact forms of sentences are formulated. Most of the masters of style and creative writing emphasize having something to write about, planning the composition as a whole, and come down to the details of mechanical features as one of the last items to be considered. The modern psychology and the growing emphasis on organization of our thinking have turned our attention recently to the importance of this newer point of view. The fact that we learn to

read as wholes more successfully than building up wholes out of isolated words and parts of words suggests that this is the most profitable attack on the psychology of language expression. Consequently I believe that this phase of research should receive more emphasis and studies should be proposed which attempt to analyze the whole composition into its rhetorical elements, including the paragraph and the balance and relatedness of sentences, instead of confining our research attack to the analysis of the smallest details.

A REPLY TO DR. SYMONDS

ROBERT C. POOLEY

IN his discussion of Dr. Greene's "Report on Research in Elementary Language," Dr. Symonds makes use of certain terms in connection with changes in the English language which I feel should not pass without protest. I refer to the second paragraph, in which he says, "With the extension of mass education, more and more people have become literate, yet their backgrounds and interests do not necessarily place them in the literary class. Consequently, our language standards are being influenced more at the present time by persons who are naturally careless in the use of language than ever before. . . . If one will observe the changes recommended, he will note that almost every one of them is what psychologists would call 'response by analogy'. . . . Every careless usage of this kind . . . helps to break down the grammatical structure, and our language at the present time is full of inconsistencies which have been forced upon it by similar psychological carelessness."

Underlying these remarks of Dr. Symonds I find three basic fallacies with regard to the nature and use of language which I shall attempt to point out, though space forbids adequate answers. The first fallacy is the theory that "literary" English is correct English; the second is the assumption that deviation from literary forms is "carelessness"; and third, the hard-dying doctrine that change in language structure is corruption.

Language itself is the product of a people, not of a small class or section, and consequently the facts of a language must include every observable phenomenon within that language. But standards in language are distinctly a class product, and any standard has only as much authority and prestige as the social group which made it. For a long time education was the privilege of the few, so that "literacy" and "literary" were practically synonymous terms. But with the extension of education through the American public schools to great masses of the people, "literacy" has become the possession of vast numbers who are not "literary." It is scarcely reasonable, therefore, to assume that the niceties of language, which were never unanimously accepted even by the small literary minority, should become the standard for a great nation of educated, but not literary, people. What the American public school needs is a standard of correct English which bears the authority and the acceptance of the great mass of educated people who have no need for literary exactitude. I cannot therefore agree with Dr. Symonds' lament that our language is suffering at the hands of a literate but not literary class.

I am surprised that a writer of Dr. Symonds' training and attainments should use the word "carelessness" in connection with language deviation. Language can only be described as "careless" when a speaker departs from a standard of use which he himself has accepted and mastered. When the majority of educated people ignore a certain distinction in language like *it is I*, the substituted form *it's me* is not carelessness, but rather the tacit observance of a standard having the authority of the social group which uses it. The only question to ask about any language form which departs from traditional rule is, "What is the relative author-

ity and standing of the group who use it?"

Despite Dr. Otto Jespersen's brilliant thesis of many years back, that change in language, and particularly the weakening of grammatical structure, is improvement in language, and not corruption, it is difficult to vanquish the eighteenth-century horror of change as corruption. Dr. Symonds writes of the "inconsistencies which have been forced upon it (English) by psychological carelessness" as though there were a once perfect English now corrupted by the changes which he deplors. Anyone at all acquainted with the history of English knows that change, and particularly the weakening of the grammatical structure, is the one constant fact about English which is incontrovertible; that at no time in its history has English been free from grammatical "inconsistencies," nor will it ever be; and that this very weakening of the grammatical structure is one of the glories of modern English. Surely Dr. Symonds would not urge the return to thirty-two inflectional endings for the common adjective, nor the revival of the *thou art* and *thou wert* forms, yet he does object to the same processes which freed our language from these complexities. At its root this objection hurls back to the confusion of the facts of language with standards in language. Hence he says, "We should think twice before we accede to extending this practice by taking over these careless practices in our schools." The answer is simple and direct. If any deviation from former practice, or any weakening of the grammatical structure, has become sufficiently a part of the language to bear the tacit authority of the great mass of educated people, it is standard current English, and should be so taught in the schools, to the utter neglect of antiquity, traditional grammar, logic, literary authority, or personal prejudice.

Editorial

"United We Stand"

FAR and near are heard the rallying shouts educators deployed along the financial front. The battle cry is echoed in the editorials of educational periodicals; circulars and hand-bills re-echo it; monographs and pamphlets give volume to it. The rights of children to schooling will not with impunity be further curtailed by selfishness and greed.

The Michigan Education Association has fired an effective broadside for "A Square Deal for the Children of Michigan and their Teachers" with a circular now being widely distributed. There will be no further dragging of education in the dust in this state, the Michigan Education Association declares, and none of the indignities visited upon Chicago school children and their teachers will be tolerated in Michigan. The campaign is evidently one of aggression along the following lines:

"Maintain a proper minimum program until funds locally available are exhausted, and then close schools unless additional State aid is provided. . .

"No further curtailment that will deny educational privileges to the children of the poor.

"Teachers must be paid a living wage and be compensated in fair proportion to their training, experience, and ability. No teachers shall be paid less than the minimum in the N. R. A. general code.

"The right of every teacher to exercise all prerogatives of citizenship must be recognized.

"There shall be as much regard for

the inviolability of teachers' contracts as for other obligations of the district."

The "School Finance Charter" contained in the report of the National Conference on the Financing of Education, published by the Department of Superintendence of the N. E. A., furnishes a list of essentials to the adequate financing of education. Under "Educational Opportunity" appear the following paragraphs:

"Universal Education. Funds to provide every child and youth a complete educational opportunity. . . This right to be preserved regardless of residence, race, or economic status and to constitute an inalienable claim on the resources of local, state and national governments. . .

"Effective teaching. In every classroom competent teachers maintained at an economic level which will secure a high quality of socially motivated and broadly trained professional service."

One explanation of the persistent looting of school systems during the past four years is to be found in the complaisant attitude of teachers. Editorials in the educational press, circulars like the one issued in Michigan, commissions appointed to study and report on conditions in the schools, and the universal indignation among teachers indicate that this complaisance is happily disappearing. Whether or not these forces will protect the educational system from further encroachments, and restore it to a point where it can serve the nation effectively depends on the sustained fervency and single-mindedness with which educators work for these ends.

NEW ISSUES IN TEACHING READING

(Continued from page 164)

pheral problem; nor is it an accidental task. It is rather a fundamental problem affecting the welfare of the state and its perpetuity, and as such should receive major consideration." It follows, therefore, that one of our major responsibilities is to cultivate strong motives for and permanent interests in reading that will contribute to enrichment of life, to increasing understanding, and to greater social efficiency.

Finally, the materials read should contribute directly to the development of personality. In this connection, the need is urgent for the cultivation of those attitudes and ideals which are characteristic of

a socially-minded rather than a self-centered or anti-social individual. The need was never greater for instruction which reveals clearly the relation of individuals to the group and to social progress. Equally imperative is the need for the development of those social virtues which are indispensable if our democratic institutions and modes of life are to persist. To the extent that the materials read emphasize at times such attitudes and ideals, that their social significance is fully appreciated, and that opportunity is provided to exemplify them in daily life, will they become dynamic in the lives of young people and adults.



LETTER WRITING IN THE ELEMENTARY GRADES

(Continued from page 173)

Assuredly, with high spirits and a firm resolve because of the importance of our quest, may we strive to help boys and girls also to consider letters "a joy of earth," to derive as much pleasure in writ-

ing as seemed to be felt by the girl whose letter we have just read and to imbue them with a will to make all letters that they write a distinct pleasure to those who may receive them.



TESTING OF THE USE OF BOOKS

(Continued from page 176)

3. _____
- | | |
|---|---|
| a. What methods of irrigation are used in the cultivation of apples? _____ | c. What is meant by frost drainage? _____ |
| b. Why is the Ozark region particularly good for the growing of apples? _____ | d. How are apples shipped to us? _____ |
| | e. In what parts of the world are apples grown? _____ |

Shop Talk

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

Annual Meeting

President Walter Barnes announces that the theme of the annual meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English, to be held in Detroit, November 30, December 1 and 2, will be "Recent Experiments and Experiences in English Teaching." High lights on research completed or being made in literature, language, composition, and English teaching methods will be presented by eminent representatives of the English field at the general sessions, and more detailed accounts of studies and experiments will be given at special subject conferences.

At the annual banquet on Friday evening, December 1, the serious side of English teaching will be forgotten for the time, and its humorous and human phases will be discussed by speakers with an outlook on their profession seasoned as well as scholarly. The meeting will close with the usual luncheon on Saturday of the Thanksgiving week-end.

Because of its outstanding reputation and advantageous location, the Statler Hotel has been chosen as convention headquarters. Reservations may be made direct or through the Council offices in Chicago. The customary reduction in railroad fare will be allowed those who attend the meeting.

Among the attractions which Detroit has to offer the visitor are its far-famed automobile factories, phenomena of the modern industrial world, beautiful Belle Isle Park, and a boulevard system which is the pride of this up-to-date city. E. L. Miller, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, who is chairman of the local committee, promises that there will be ample opportunities provided for sightseeing during the convention in addition to arrangements for other entertainment of Detroit's teacher-guests.

The complete program for the Council's twenty-third annual meeting will be published in the October number of this magazine.

The Exhibit

As in the past, there will be an exhibit in connection with the annual meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English to be held in Detroit, November 30 to December 2. The theme

of the Council meeting this year will be "Recent Experiments and Experiences in English Teaching." No material, however, will be excluded from the exhibit because it cannot be classified under this heading. Student work which is outstanding in excellence and which can be easily examined and understood is to be preferred. The exhibit will include all grades and all phases of work usually included in the field of English. In addition to the work of pupils, emphasis will be placed on projects, graphs, charts, and devices used by the teacher in promoting better instruction. Publications, such as school papers, magazines, poetry booklets, drill material, etc. will be displayed.

Teachers who wish to send material for exhibit may make any inquiries of Roland A. Welch, Duffee Intermediate School, 2470 Collingwood Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.

The Council Constitution

In accordance with the directions of the Executive Committee, mimeographed copies of the revised Council Constitution have been prepared. Copies may be obtained upon request addressed to the Chicago office, 211 West 68th Street.

PENNY WISE, POUND FOOLISH

The following excerpt from a letter from the publicity manager of one of the large publishing houses presents so clearly a situation which all teachers must deplore that we are giving it here.

"The total expenditures for textbooks in this country under normal conditions are about 1.63% of the total cost of education. Today even that ratio has been substantially reduced. For purposes of public consumption the textbook budget is by implication often represented to be a vastly more important factor of school expense than it actually is. Moreover, expenditures for school books are often the target of attack by politicians who would mislead the public by a smoke screen to cover other expenditure items. . . Under pressure from the community for greater economies, they look about for ways and means to effect them. Unable to cut certain fixed items . . . they have been at last obliged to defer their cutting until they get to the last and actually least substantial item—textbooks—which they then decimate.

"The public should know the true facts; when school officials talk about a 25%, or 50%, or

75% savings in the cost of books, it sounds well to a harrassed community, but the sum involved is negligible . . . Responsible educational leaders should educate their constituents as to the very small part of the school budget which even a normal purchase of textbooks involves, and it is reasonable to propose that a ratio of purchases consistent with the actual needs and resources of the community must be maintained."

Besides the unhygienic aspects of worn and dirty school books, teachers are faced with instructional difficulties arising from too few textbooks and from worn and tattered books in the pupils' hands.

THE CIRCUS: A BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR PRIMARY GRADES

Grace I. Dick

Librarian, Pasadena City Schools

Autumn is here and in our classrooms children's interests run to county fairs, and the huge gaudy poster announcements of the coming circus. What could be healthier or make for better interests and activities in the daily classes? The three R's can all be taught in these engaging interests, besides much else of real informational and factual value.

Take the circus alone. Here splendid opportunity is offered to interest the child in animals, the country from which they come, the inhabitants of these countries, and the animals' habits and behavior. Care and training of animals and pets can be carried on in the classrooms and homes to the mutual benefit of all concerned.

- | | | | |
|-------------|--|---------------|---|
| Adams— | Five Little Friends p. 25 | Dobbs— | Primary Handwork. "Animals and Toys" p. 102-11 |
| Andress— | Summer Fun p. 82-93 | Donahey— | Teenie Weenie Land. "The Clown" p. 44-51 |
| | At the Circus | Elson— | Elson Basic Reader, I |
| Bailey— | Boys and Girls of Modern Days p. 59-69 | Freeman— | Child Story Readers |
| Beard— | Boy Pioneers | Freeman— | Terry and Billy. "Circus," p. 102 |
| Beskow— | Adventures of Peter and Lotta | Gale— | Circus Babies |
| Bird— | Bristles | Hader— | Coming, Two Funny Clowns |
| Blaisdell— | Twilight Town. "Circus Parade" pp. 136-150 | Hader— | Farmer in the Dell |
| Bolenius— | Bolenius, I. "Playing Circus" p. 96 | Hader— | Tooky |
| Bostock— | Training of Wild Animals | Hardy— | New Stories |
| Brett— | Circus Day | Hardy— | Surprise Stories p. 74-100 |
| Buffington— | Circus Reader | Hull— | Pet Elephant |
| Coe— | Easy Steps in Reading. "Toto's Show," p. 84-91 | Hutchinson— | The Circus Comes to Town |
| Coleman— | Pathway II. "Bear Plays Soldier" p. 141-6 | Johnson— | Dot and David |
| Conklin— | Ways of the Circus | Kaufman— | Tigers and Things |
| Cooper— | Circus Day | Lathrop— | Fairy Circus |
| Cooper— | Under the Big Top | Lewis— | New Friends p. 95-112 |
| Cooper— | With the Circus | Lewis— | Silent II. "Circus Parade" p. 36-46 |
| | | Mackall— | Poodle Oodle of Doodle Farm |
| | | Milne— | Winnie-the-Pooh |
| | | Moon— | Faraway Desert |
| | | | My Book of Wild Animals |
| | | Nida— | Trailing our Animal Friends |
| | | Norwood— | Circus Menagerie |
| | | Norwood— | Other Side of the Circus |
| | | Otis— | Toby Tyler |
| | | Pearse— | Through the Menagerie Tent with the Circus Barker |
| | | Pennell— | Children's Own Reader, I. p. 87-100 |
| | | Phillips— | Lively Adventures of Johnny Ping Wing |
| | | Plimpton— | Your Workshop. p. 94-104 |
| | | Pyle— | Black-eyed Puppy |
| | | Rose— | Boy Showman and Entertainer |
| | | Searson— | Studies in Reading, Bk. 4. "Circus Day Parade" p. 313-17 |
| | | Serl— | In the Animal World (3) |
| | | Smart— | Circus Fun for First and Second Year Pupils |
| | | Smith, E. B.— | Circus and All About It |
| | | Smith, E. B.— | Noah's Ark |
| | | Smith, L. R.— | Circus Book |
| | | Stone— | Webster Reader, Joyful Reading, Vol. 2 p. 1-21 |
| | | Suzzallo— | Fact and Story Readers I. "Merry Tales" p. 121-35 |
| | | Tippett— | Toys and Toy Makers. "Whirling Clown" p. 81-90 |
| | | White— | Boys and Girls at Work and Play. (Do and Learn Readers, Primer) p. 89-108 |
| | | White— | Duck and Its Friends |
| | | Willson— | Circus A B C |
| | | Youmans— | "Teddy Horse" |

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